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Committee on Relations with the Host Country

Letter dated 20 September 2005 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Committee

I have the honour to enclose a copy of a note verbale dated 19 September 2005 that has been sent to the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations in response to that Mission's note of 6 September 2005 regarding visas for invitees to the second World Conference of Speakers of Parliament convened earlier this month by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (see annex). I request that you, in your capacity as Chairman of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Committee.

(*Signed*) John R. **Bolton**

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Annex to the letter dated 20 September 2005 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Committee

The United States Mission to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations and, with reference to the latter's note NV. 424 of September 6, wishes to comment on the question of visas for the second World Conference of Speakers on Parliaments ("the Conference") which was held at the United Nations from September 7 to 9, 2005.

The Conference was convened by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and not the United Nations, and therefore is not considered to be official United Nations business. Visas for Cuban Government officers and employees are generally only granted when the United States has an international legal obligation to do so. The United States does not believe it has such an obligation in this case. In a similar event five years ago, the United Nations Legal Counsel provided a legal opinion with respect to the first World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments hosted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and said that the denial of entry visas to invitees of the Conference would not constitute a violation of the host country's obligations under the Headquarters Agreement.

The United States is mindful of its obligations under the Headquarters Agreement to permit the entry of representatives of members for the purpose of conducting official United Nations business. Accordingly, visas were authorized for the Cuban delegation, including the President of the Cuban National Assembly, to the 60th United Nations General Assembly and the High Level Event.

The United States looks forward to a time when conditions are such that the visa restrictions on Cuban Government officials and employees can be lifted.